



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

CHARLES HORTON PECK

STEWART H. BURNHAM

"Lift the veil of interception between your vision and the most lonely spot in the heart of the Adirondack wilderness on some fair day, and you may see a man examining a vine his sharp eye has detected in the tangled undergrowth. The man's figure is sparse and lithe and a little stooped. His hair is partially gray, his eyes glow with delight. 'A new species!' he breathes half audibly. Charles H. Peck, state botanist, has added another specimen to his long list of the various members of the New York state flora, and it will soon be placed among his treasures in the state herbarium."

Again we will lift the veil and go back eighty-five years. Charles Horton Peck, son of Joel B. and Pamela Horton Peck, of English descent, was born in the northeastern part of the town of Sand Lake, March 30, 1833. "Sand Lake, Rensselaer county, was just a few clearings less than an unbroken forest then." About 1794, "his great grandfather, Eleazer Peck, removed from Farmington, Conn., to Sand Lake, N. Y., being attracted there by the oak timber, from which were manufactured staves for the Albany market."

As soon as Dr. Peck was old enough to be of assistance in his father's sawmill, at the foot of Larnard hill, his schooldays were limited to the winter season. "The schoolhouse that provided shelter for the master and a few children from the nearest homes was built of logs. The seats were made of saw-log slabs turned flat side up."

Speaking of the abundance of passenger pigeons in Sand Lake when he was a boy, he remarked that they were fond of red and black elderberries and buckwheat. He recalled going one time with his grandfather, who enjoyed fishing and hunting, to catch pigeons with a net, using a decoy and working the net from a brush hut nearby. During the morning the pigeons came down,

but, on pulling the net, it broke on account of age and most of the birds got away. It was late afternoon before they succeeded in getting the pigeons to come around again. The net had been mended and they had gone without their dinner; but this time two dozen or more birds were captured.

Dr. Peck first went to the Cranberry marsh at Sand Lake with his father, when eight or ten years old, to pick large cranberries,

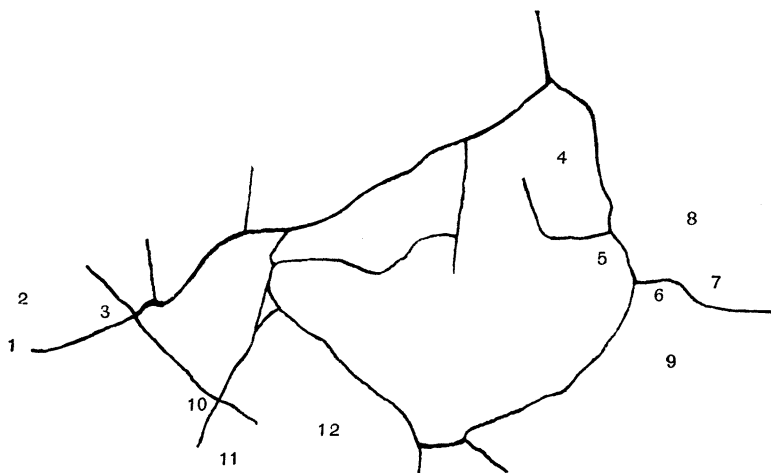


FIG. 1. Sketch showing the roads leading from Averill Park to Cranberry Marsh and the birthplace of Dr. Peck. 1, Averill Park, 800°; 2, Sand Lake; 3, Sand Lake Village; 4, Big Bowman Pond, 1500°; 5, Little Bowman Pond; 6, Birthplace of Dr. Peck; 7, Taberton; 8, Cranberry Marsh; 9, Larnard Hill, 1800°; 10, Glasshouse; 11, Glass Lake; 12, Bear's Head.

which were then abundant. The trail for a mile or so led through the dense forest. The marsh was very soft and quaking, but now it is growing firm from the cutting away of the forest, which causes a drying out of the soil so that less water reaches the marsh. It is mostly shaded by shrubs, tamaracks, spruces, and balsam firs. The large cranberry and the pitcher plant are now found only along the stream flowing through the marsh and in one or two wet, circular openings near the lower end. Sixty years ago the foreign population of Sand Lake and Berlin nearly eradicated the *Sarracenia*, upon learning from the Shakers that the roots had a medicinal value in the treatment of smallpox. About this time, also, the women and children dug goldthread

extensively from the mossy knolls under the spruces and balsams about the border of the swamp.

One could thrust a pole for eight or ten feet through the soft ooze in those days. The marsh was well known to the Indians, who came from the Hudson to gather cranberries; and Dr. Peck's great-grandmother once went with them and is said to have been the first white woman to visit the marsh. It lies about twelve hundred feet above the Hudson, in the northeastern part of the town of Sand Lake; a walk of five miles from Averill Park, and about three fourths of a mile from the German Hotel. One finds both black and red spruce on the marsh, although, according to Sargent, the latter species is confined to uplands. A list of the plants of Cranberry Marsh is given in the N. Y. State Mus. Bull. 150: 71-72. 1911.

In 1841, Dr. Peck made his first visit to Albany and ten years later he entered the State Normal School, which was located where the Christian Brothers Academy now stands, at the rear of Geological Hall. While at the Normal, he met a young lady at his boarding-house who was to take a class in botany and natural history in a city Jewish school, and desired some one to go to the woods and fields to hunt flowers for class study. By accident, the lot fell to Dr. Peck, who consented to go for her, and thereby awakened an interest in the subject which shaped and directed his whole future career. "Thus it often happens that apparently trifling circumstances give a color and character to the history of an individual which are far reaching in their influence and most important in their final results."

Dr. Peck was one of the first to join Prof. J. H. Salisbury's voluntary class in botany, taking it as an extra study, as it was not at that time included in the curriculum of the Normal School. Graduating from the Normal in 1852, on returning home, he was put to work in the hayfield, but all his spare time was spent in collecting and analyzing plants. During the winter of 1852-1853, he successfully taught a large district school, having an average attendance of about sixty pupils, in Poestenkill, Rensselaer County.

Dr. Peck now determined to prepare himself for a college course, and took his classical preparatory course at the Sand

Lake Collegiate Institute. He entered Union College in the fall of 1855, and received the degree of bachelor of arts in 1859. So high was his standing that he was one of three members of his class to be awarded the Nott Prize Scholarship, an honor given only to those who passed a special thorough and extended examination. While at Union, he received his botanical instruction from Prof. Jonathan Pearson; and, in place of athletics, he made botanical excursions. He was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Literary Society of Union College.

Just before graduation, Dr. Peck accepted a position as teacher in classics, mathematics, and botany in the Sand Lake Collegiate Institute, which position he held for about three years. He married Mary Catherine Sliter, the daughter of Calvin and Anna Maria Sliter, of Snyders Corners, Rensselaer County, April 10, 1861. He had two sons: Harry Sliter, born 1863, and Charles Albert, born 1870. Mrs. Peck died February 26, 1912.

Soon after his marriage, he was one day putting a stick of wood in the stove and noticed a moss upon it. He became interested, and went to Brooklyn, where he met Prof. Alphonse Wood and was advised to get Sullivant's work on mosses, which appeared in the earlier editions of Gray's Manual. Equipped with the Manual and a \$12.00 microscope, he returned home and began the study of bryology independent of a teacher or collection. He would search for the name of a moss for hours, if necessary, reading each description as he went along until he found the one that fitted his specimen.

Afterwards, while teaching in Albany, he presented his collection to the State; and it was there seen by Judge Geo. W. Clinton, of Buffalo, one of the regents, who was finally instrumental in securing Dr. Peck's appointment in the State Cabinet of Natural History. The "Catalogue of Mosses presented to the State of New York by Charles H. Peck" is published in Ann. Rep. State Cab. Nat. Hist, 18: 193-194. 1865. He states that "of the 144 species named . . . 104 were found in the town of Sand Lake."

In 1862 he received the degree of master of arts from Union; and, in the same year, he was instructor in the classical department of the State Street High School at Albany, a private school for boys under the control and principalship of Levi Cass. Dr.

Peck would often relate how on Monday mornings, when the boys came in from their Sunday holiday unprepared in their lessons, instead of flogging them, he would take from his desk plants which he cherished and talk to the boys about them.

On the first of January, 1867, he was appointed by the State to fill the herbarium with specimens representing the plant life of the State. There were at that time about 1,800 specimens in the collections of the State Cabinet of Natural History; but, at the close of Dr. Peck's career, the herbarium of the State Museum contained many thousands of specimens, including thousands of priceless mycological collections.

Rev. Moses A. Curtis, of North Carolina, first gave Dr. Peck a start in the fungi, which was the beginning of the mycological collection of the State Herbarium—a collection, the gathering and study of which has given him a world-wide name for all time.

In 1868, Dr. Peck visited the Adirondacks and climbed Wall-face without a guide. A very sudden, cold rainstorm came up, and on attempting to descend the mountain in the clouds, he fortunately came upon a camp well supplied with food and blankets and was thus saved from great peril. After this experience, he seldom attempted to climb the higher Adirondacks alone.

He visited North Elba a score or more times, and climbed Mt. Marcy eleven times, usually taking two days for the trip. This high peak "is in the center of a very rugged mountainous region, where high peaks separated by deep and narrow valleys rise on all sides. From its summit an observer may look in every direction, and obtain views unsurpassed in beauty and grandeur. A visit to this lofty station necessitates a tiresome walk of six or seven miles through the woods over a rough trail and up some steep acclivities. But the attraction of the place, the magnificent views it affords and the richness of its flora bring many visitors, and few return without feeling well rewarded for the labor and expense incurred." The reports of the Adirondack and State Land Survey, by Verplanck Colvin, 1880, 1891, contain preliminary lists of the plants of the summit of Mt. Marcy; and the N. Y. State Mus. Bull. 25: 657-673. 1899, a more complete annotated list.

In 1883, a law was passed creating the office of State Botanist; and Dr. Peck was appointed by the Regents to fill the position.

At the 112th Commencement of Union College, June 10, 1908, in presenting Dr. Peck for his degree, Chairman Brownell said:

"By the direction of the Board of Trustees, I present for the degree of Doctor of Science, Charles Horton Peck of the Class of 1859. A graduate of this College, he has been for many years in public service as Botanist of the Empire State, Author, and Student of Nature and of Science. I request that the degree be conferred upon him."

President Alexander conferred the degree in the following words:

"Charles Horton Peck. For faithful labors and high attainments in the realm of Science and for long and fruitful service, by the authority committed to me by the Trustees of Union College I confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Science and bid you enjoy all the rights, privileges and immunities pertaining thereto."

Dr. Peck retired from his position of State Botanist early in 1915, after a period of forty-eight years of faithful, conscientious, and honest service. He died at his home in Menands, July 11, 1917; and was buried in the family plot in Sand Lake Cemetery near Averill Park.

Dr. Peck was the author of many botanical articles and reports, preëminent among which is the long series of annual reports of the State Botanist from 1867 to 1912. He was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; a member of the Botanical Society of America; of the Albany Historical and Art Society; American Forestry Association; National Geographic Society; New England Botanical Club; and many mycological and scientific societies; and was a devout member of the Presbyterian church for over sixty years.

"Dr. Peck has accomplished a great work. He has built a gigantic monument to himself by his long labor in the herbarium. He has wandered over every section of the State from the Adirondack wilds to the Montezuma marshes, and westward to the grape belt along the shores of Lake Erie."

"Without the advantages of European travel and study, and frequently working without access to the older European literature upon fungi, his work stands out with conspicuous individ-

uality." "Anyone who has ever strolled into the great open field of mycology will meet with his alluring guide posts; but to all who have studied the fungi his researches have been a genuine stimulation." "It is one of the lessons of his life that the practical pursuit of botany is contributing to long life and glad heartiness."

"His work will stand for all time as the foundation upon which later students of the fungi may build with safety a more elaborate morphological and systematic revision of the fleshy and woody groups of fungi."

HUDSON FALLS, N. Y.